3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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517 quite simple. Visiting, feasting, the dance, story-telling, and competitive games constituted their principal means of recreation and amusement. The Comanches were very sociable and spent much time visiting. Visiting and feasts furnished opportunity for the discussion of news and tribal welfare. The religious ceremonies were regarded by many as less an occasion for worship than an exciting and interesting social gathering.

Social gatherings in the evenings were filled with mirth, revelry, and enjoyment. Before the arrival of the white trader, the Comanches were noted for their abstinence from intoxicating drink. Most evenings were devoted to singing and storytelling, which was not only
[869] entertainment but education. By frequent repetition of stories, the tribal history, traditions, legends, and ideals were perpetuated for the young. Older people seldom grew weary of repeating the stories or of listening to them.

517 On other evenings young men and women gathered around a fire which had been kindled in the village, and while it reflected its
535 dancing shadows against the yellow lodge-skins, they danced and chanted their songs to the accompaniment of the rhythmic beat of the drum. Those who did not participate in the dance sat on the ground in a circle, facing the musicians who sat in the center beating their small drums. Men and women dancers stood a short distance apart facing each other. When the music began, a man would select a dancing partner by placing his hands round her waist, while she clasped him in similar fashion. The affair lasted an hour or more. The Indian, who had been taught to dance almost from the time he had been able to lift his feet, danced with rhythm and freedom, and every movement was vivid and natural.

●526 Competitive games continued from childhood to middle life, and when a person became too old to participate, he still enjoyed watching them.

When food was plentiful and no necessary jobs were pressing, a Comanche really liked to settle down for some good fun. Men and women alike were great sports; gambling was a passion. Their horse racing has already been described, but it was not their only athletic sport. The women liked to play double ball or shinny, a strenuous pastime, to say the least. They set up arrow-shooting contests to test

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speed and distance skills. With the older men they threw arrows at marks and at the wheel. The women also had a sport of their own: kick-the-ball. Younger men wrestled and in older times played at kicking each other. And adults of both sexes spent hours in games of chance. Then there were social dances of a purely recreational nature, storytelling, gossiping, and singing. A Comanche rarely had good reason to be bored, and with his usually extroverted personality his lust for life was strong.

Shinny and double ball were exclusively women's games among the Comanches. Lacrosse, definitely a man's game and important in the lives of the eastern Indians, was never taken up by the Comanche men. The two ball games played by the women were essentially similar in principle, but different in equipment required and in its use.

Ten women or girls to a side made up the usual team. The players, garbed in showy dress, were wont to gather on the ball field about mid-afternoon. If they intended to play shinny, two stakes were driven into the ground at both ends of a field a hundred or more yards long. Each player had a curved stick. The ball, made of hair-stuffed deerskin, was flattened and three or four inches in diameter. The rules of the game were essentially similar to those of our own shinny.

Double ball was a much faster variation of shinny. One stake at each end of the field formed the goal. A rawhide thong eighteen inches long was substituted for a ball. A hooked stick three feet long was used by each player to catch and throw the thong. The game started with a referee tossing the thong up between two centers as in basketball. The one who caught it had to throw it with her stick to a teammate, who ran toward her goal with it. If blocked by an opponent, she tossed it over her opponent and caught it coming down on the other side, continuing on her way, or else she passed it over to a teammate. The object was to maneuver into position so that the thong could be thrown at the stake. When it wrapped itself around the pole, a goal had been scored. This game, called *natsi'ɒ:et*, was the favorite of the Water Horse band, who were "tall, thin, and fleet of foot." When two bands gathered for games, they would bring up great bundles of goods for betting. They beat all other bands at *natsi'ɒ:et* until the others refused to play them.[24]

[24] Informant: That's It.

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●526 Shinny as a woman's game was practically universal among North American Indians, so it is hardly surprising to find it as a sport among the Comanches. Double ball was also a woman's game throughout most of the United States, except among the West Coast tribes, where it was played by men. Inasmuch as it was played by Paiutes and Shoshones in the Great Basin, the Comanches most likely enjoyed the game before their migration.

The lives and livelihood of the Comanches turned on their skill with the bow and arrow. Informal archery tournaments occurred on any festive occasion to test bow and arrow skills in several ways. One type of contest placed a premium on speed in fitting and discharging flights of arrows. The players took a certain number of arrows, which they held with their bows in the left hand. Each player in turn advanced in front of the judges and discharged his first arrow upward as high as possible. He then proceeded to discharge the others as rapidly as possible. Victory belonged to the one who succeeded in having the greatest number of arrows in the air at once.[25]

Shooting for the mark, called *wɔ'kɔrɔ*, was done in the manner of "bowls." Each contestant used four arrows. The first marksman sent out an arrow, near or far, as he wished. Then he and his opponent alternated in shooting their arrows. The closest to the mark arrow won the round, as in horseshoes. The loser of the round had the chance to shoot the target arrow on the next try.

Exactly the same game was played with throwing arrows specially constructed to be light and long with feathers trimmed closer than a bow arrow. This arrow game, when throwing for the mark, was known to the Comanches as *tiʔɔwɔkɔ*. Sometimes the players decided to throw for distance instead. In this case, they called the game *narɔ'tɔnɛ:lɔ*, and a good throw was considered to be two hundred yards—hardly a mean distance. Players and spectators alike bet on these games.

Young men like to play the wheel game, *atatsi*, as a more complicated sport of arrow throwing. Among the Crows the wheels collected by Lowie were nine and one-quarter and ten inches in diameter. The Comanches called for sharper marksmanship, because their wheels, according to informants, were only four or five inches

[25] Domenech, *Seven Years Residence in the Great Deserts of North America*, II, 198.

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across. Otherwise, the construction of the Comanche wheel was exactly like that illustrated by Lowie.[26] It consisted of willow rim with rawhide spokes radiating from a rawhide circle, one to two inches large, in the middle. The special throwing arrow, three to five feet long, was like the Crows' in having a forked feathered butt. It differed, however, in possessing a lashed-on barb of chinaberry, a hard wood, at the point.

The wheel game called for four players, two to a side. The teams stood facing each other, five or six steps from the starter, who rolled a hoop or wheel down the line between them. The players threw their special arrows simultaneously. If an arrow hit went through the center hole, its barb made it stick and the wheel fell down. Now the side that had hit the mark had the advantage, for the other side had to throw ordinary arrows at the center hole of the fallen wheel from the spot where the successful marksman had stood. Any arrow that failed to hit the center hole was captured and kept by the other side. Any arrow that hit the center hole was recovered by the thrower. Thus the team that first put its barbed arrow in the hole while the hoop was rolling stood a chance to win up to ten arrows while not having to risk a single one of its own. Players without much skill could agree to shoot for the spaces between the spokes instead of the center hole. Spectators bet on one side or the other, and when they got excited put up their own arrows to be thrown.[27]

The old kicking game played by the boys in the legend of the split of the Comanches and Shoshones, although remembered, seems to have been dropped as a sport. The women, however, were still playing kick-the-ball in 1933. Hopping on the left foot, they keep a rag ball in the air by "dribbling" it off the ground with the instep of the right. The idea is to get as far as possible before the ball is missed and falls to the ground. One or two girls or women play on a side, and good players can carry the ball seventy-five to one hundred yards. A variation is duration kicking in place, and in this a skilled player can keep the ball in the air two or three hundred kicks.

When it was too hot for much exertion, or at night when sports were impossible, or at any time, if a person was too lazy or too old

[26] Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, fig. 11, p. 102.
[27] Informants: Breaks Something; Post Oak Jim.

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857 spent in gang play. When a new camp was set up, they set out to find a good water hole in the creek where they could play all day. Following and baiting small birds and large insects fascinated them. [411 Hummingbirds were shot with headless arrows having a vertically split foreshaft in which to catch the birds. Boys would spend all 224] day chasing one bird, according to Skinny and Wrinkled, in a kind of concentration that boded well for the future hunter and tracker of men and beasts. Bull bats were shot with arrows having horizontally split foreshafts. Grasshoppers were shot with hummingbird arrows, and their hind legs were eaten for lunch.

The boys had great fun by tying two grasshoppers together with a short thread and then crowding about to watch them "wrestle." They would jump and jerk each other up short. The one that first fell on its back was the loser. They liked to catch "shit rollers," tie a piece of straw to a leg, and watch them fly, running fleetly after them as they followed their courses. They would stick a small straw up the anus of a horsefly and turn the insect loose—which perhaps showed how they felt about horseflies.

Small boys, who had no real arrows, made them of reed shafts with grasshopper legs for points and a ballast daub of mud stuck two inches from the point. They killed night hawks with slings and amused themselves playing with whirrers—two strings attached to a bone and pulled taut to make a whirring noise.

Although boys were by themselves most of the time, the younger ones now and then joined the little girls to play camp. On the sand by the creek they built small windbreaks and arbors. A play group leader was made "chief," and each boy chose a wife or wives. They all swam in the creek, gathered in ponies with the girls, and rode together. Some time was spent by the boys in hunting squirrels to bring into camp for their "wives" to cook, while the girls gathered berries, edible roots, and the eggs of turkeys, ducks, quail, and prairie chickens. All this swag made for good make-believe feasts.

[836] The more precocious dallied in sexual experimentation. "One day we played at being married. I did my best to make a baby with my wife," said Post Oak Jim.

857 When younger boys and girls played together (but not when ● 526 they were playing camp), there were several forms of joint games.

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A hilarious favorite was "grizzly bear." For this, a mound of sand, called the "sugar," was fashioned. Then one child was dragged around by his heels to smooth a circle around the "sugar." Outside the circle all the children formed a queue, holding to each others' waists and facing the mound. The leader was the "mother" protecting her young from the "grizzly," who was played by a child inside the circle. His part was to reach out of the circle and seize a child, but the mother protected the children by swinging the line back and forth. At last one child was caught and subjected to the penalty of being tickled ("eaten") by the bear in the circle. After that, players would break out of the line and try to dash in to steal some "sugar" from the grizzly's store and get out without his catching them. As each was caught, he was tickled, and the game went on until the "sugar" was all stolen or all the children were captured.

In another group game the children all sat in a row with their feet straight out in front of them. An old man had to join them in the fun. He would advance with closed eyes and feel up and down the row until he decided to choose one child. This one he picked up by the feet, head hanging down over his back, and carried him around in a circle back to the row. The other children asked the "It" many questions: "Do you have a horse, a saddle, a belt, etc?" The given answer was always "Yes." At last they rushed forward and took their playmate off the old man's back, crying that they were going to eat the old man. So they tickled the old fellow with joyous cries.

Other times they took pieces of old hide to the tops of hills. While some of the children rode on the hides, the others pulled them bouncing down with ropes. "Guess over the hill" (*nanip'ka*) was another favorite. Two older boys would organize the game. The boy who was "It" went over the hill; another stood guard at the top to make sure he did not spy while the other children hid under robes or blankets. When called by the guard, "It" came and tried to guess the names of the hiders.[6]

On rainy days all was still; the children lay quietly at home in their family tipis, for they were superstitiously afraid of thunder and lightning. Winter was the time for the telling of stories; not summer.

[6] Informant: Post Oak Jim.

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
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stantly on the alert for evil, and yet, possessing great skill in the more peaceful and benevolent habits of the herdsman and shepherd.

The depredations of the immense number of sheep, almost daily chronicled in our gazettes, are not made to appease hunger only; but to add to the already immense flocks that overspread, as I have been told by them, the region of country lying west of the Sierra Madre, and east of California.

In the spring and summer of 1843, in company with an old friend — one of the Creeks who had emigrated west of the Mississippi, soon after the treaty with them in 1832 — I traveled westward. My guide and companion had acquired a good knowledge of the language and habits of the Camanches, Navajoes and Apaches, and had probably not altogether abstained from joining them occasionally in their irruptions upon the settlements of their timid neighbors of Chihuahua and Sonoro. I found him "as one having authority," and of course, very useful, both in the protection he afforded me, and the information he enabled me to acquire.

Among the first objects of interest to me, next to the matchless feats of horsemanship they perform, and which have so often been written of — was the number and variety of articles wrought by them, both useful and ornamental, and which might well vie with the skill of more civilized artizans. Among these were the beautiful fabrics composed of wool, and a kind of grass cloth, and some few of cotton. The object, however, of greatest interest to me, was the art of imparting to wool, etc., the beautiful colors I had often before admired, and to this I gave most attention. Like other Indians, I found them unwilling to impart knowledge voluntarily, and I had in my previous and long intercourse with the western tribes, early learned not to make inquiries that might excite their special attention to my designs. Our Indians are not disposed to impart to their white brethren, unless their citizens, any thing that might be useful out of their own country, in which particular, they are not unlike the Chinese, so that with the exceptions of their modes of dyeing and spinning, I will not now attempt to give you any certain account. The information